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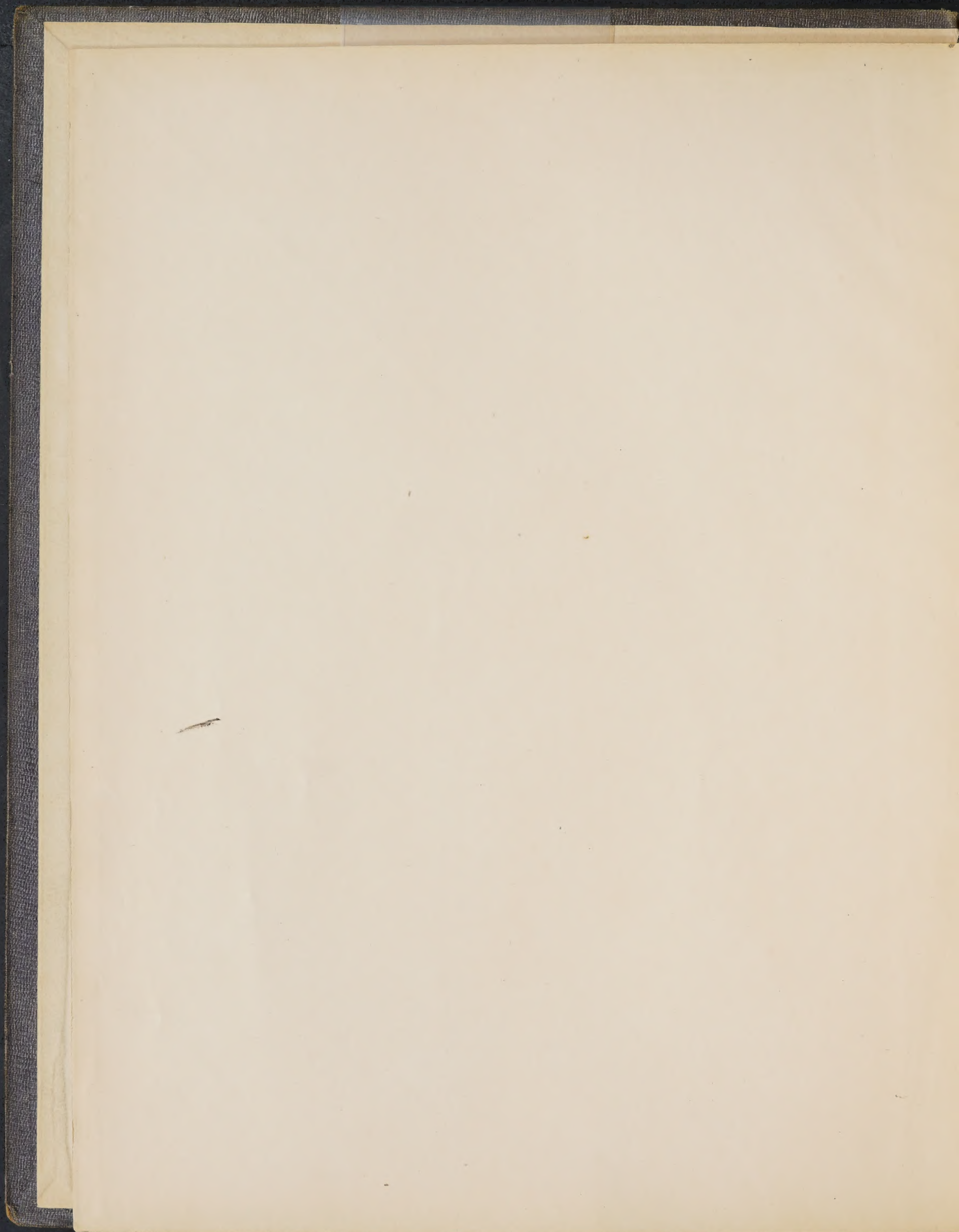
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John L. Titcomb.

L. 12



My dear Sonnet So the manie good friend I have
received at yo^r L^{ty} L^{ty} L^{ty} w^{ch} I ought to make me backward
in asking further favour onely imboldeneth me to require more
in the same kind. Yo^r L^{ty} will be warned howe soon after you
grant and take being it draweth on more and greater demands
th^{at} w^{ch} now presseth it to request yo^r L^{ty} in all you can to be
good to the poore playgers of the blacke fryers w^{ch} call them
selved by and give the Cornantes of the Ma^{ty} and aske for
the protection of the most glorious monster and Sovereigne in
th^{is} the byme of Rome trouble they are threatened by the Lo.
Mayor and Aldermen of London never friendly to them calling w^{ch}
the destruction of their meanes of livelihood by the pulling downe of
their playhouse w^{ch} is a private theatre and hath never given
occasion of anger by any disorder. These warres are two of
the chief of the companies one of them by name Richard Burbidge
w^{ch} I humbly sue for yo^r L^{ty} L^{ty} L^{ty} help for that he is a man
famous at our englishe Rehearsall one w^{ch} fillat the action to the
words and the word to the action most admirably. By the
excellence of his qualitie industry and good behavious he hath
become possessor of the blacke fryers playhouse w^{ch} hath
bene employed for playes since it was builded by his
father now more 50 years agoe. He other is a man no
lesse deserving favour and my especial friends bill of late
an actor of good account in the companies now a sharer in the
same and writer of some of our best englishe playes w^{ch} as your
L^{ty} knoweth were most singularly liked of Queen Elizabeth w^{ch} on
the companies was called upon to performe before her Ma^{ty}
at Court at Christmas and Twelfth daye. His most gracious
Ma^{ty} King James also since his coming to the throne hath
expressed his Royall favour to the companies in divers waies and
at sundrie times. The other hath to name William Shakespeare
and they are both of one countie and indeede almost of one
towne both are right famous in their qualities though it longeth
not of yo^r L^{ty} to grantie and wisdom to resort unto the playes
w^{ch} the they are wont to delight the publique eare. Their trust
and sue now is not to bee molested in their waye of life
as formerly they maintaine them selves and their wives and
families (being both married and of good reputation) as well as
the widowed and orphaned of some of their dead fellows. Yo^r
L^{ty} most bounden at com

H S

OBSERVATIONS
ON
THE SHAKSPERIAN FORGERIES

AT
BRIDGEWATER HOUSE;

ILLUSTRATIVE OF A
FACSIMILE OF THE SPURIOUS LETTER OF H. S.

BY
JAMES O. HALLIWELL, ESQ.

LONDON:
FOR PRIVATE CIRCULATION ONLY.
1853.

C. AND J. ADLARD, PRINTERS, BARTHOLOMEW CLOSE.

Observations, etc.

UNDER the firm conviction that all the Shakesperian Manuscripts preserved in the archives of the Earl of Ellesmere, at Bridgewater House, are modern forgeries, I omitted in my folio edition the fac-simile of the spurious Southampton letter, now appended to the present pamphlet. Mr. W. H. Black is of opinion that even, as seen in the fac-simile, it is open to great suspicion. I have examined the "originals" of all the documents, and will pledge myself to the opinion that they are fabrications.

It is worthy of observation that these documents are the only records that of late years have found a place in the biographies of Shakespeare, the genuineness of which has been questioned. There is nothing in the account of their discovery to suggest a doubt. "They were derived," observes Mr. Collier, "from the manuscripts of Lord Ellesmere, whose name is of course well known to every reader of our history, as Keeper of the Great Seal to Queen Elizabeth, and Lord Chancellor to James I. They are preserved at Bridgewater House; and Lord Francis Egerton gave me instant and unrestrained access to them, with permission to make use of any literary or historical information I could

discover. The Rev. H. J. Todd had been there before me, and had classed some of the letters and correspondence; *but large bundles of papers, ranging in point of date between 1581, when Lord Ellesmere was made Solicitor-General, and 1616, when he retired from the office of Lord Chancellor, remained unexplored, and it was evident that many of them had never been opened from the time when, perhaps, his own hands tied them together.*" It was amongst these latter that the Shakespeare manuscripts were discovered; and if, as is possible, a fabricator had inserted them in those bundles, a more recent enquirer, investigating the collection under the impression it had not been examined for upwards of two centuries, would be inclined to receive every paper as genuine, and as not requiring any minute investigation for the establishment of its authority. Suspicion would be disarmed, and it is possible that in this way Mr. Collier has been deceived.

When I came to make a personal inspection of these interesting papers, facilities for which were kindly granted by their noble owner, grave doubts were at once created as to their authenticity. The most important of all, the certificate from the players of the Blackfriars' Theatre to the Privy Council in 1589, instead of being either an original or a contemporary copy, is evidently at best merely a late transcript, if it be not altogether a recent fabrication. The question naturally arises, for what purpose could a document of this description have been copied in the seventeenth century, presuming it to belong to so early a period? It is comparatively of recent times that the slightest literary interest has been taken in the history of our early theatres, or even in the biography of Shakespeare; and unless it was apparent that

papers of this kind were transcribed for some legal or other special purpose, there should be great hesitation in accepting the evidence of any other but contemporary authority. The suspicious appearance of this certificate is of itself sufficient to justify great difficulties in its reception; but the doubt thus induced as to the integrity of the collection was considerably increased by an examination of a paper in the same volume, purporting to be a warrant appointing Daborne, Shakespeare, Field and Kirkham, instructors of the children of the Queen's Revels, which unquestionably appears to be a modern forgery. This document is styled by Mr. Collier "a draft either for a Patent or a Privy Seal." It is not a draft, for the lines are written bookwise, and it is also dated; neither is it a copy of a patent, as appears from the direction, "Right trustie and well-beloved;" but, if genuine, it must be considered an abridged transcript of a warrant, under the sign-manual and signet, for a patent to be issued. Now if it be shown that the letters patent to "Dabone and others" were granted on the same day on which Lord Ellesmere's paper is dated; and if it be further proved that the contents of the latter are altogether inconsistent with the circumstances detailed in the real patent, it will, I think, be conceded that no genuine draft or transcript, of the nature of that printed by Mr. Collier, can possibly exist.

It appears that the following note occurs in an entry-book of patents that passed the Great Seal while it was in the hands of Lord Ellesmere in 7 James I.:—"A Warrant for Robert Daborne and others, the Queenes Servants, to bring up and practice Children in Plaies by the name of the Children of the Queen's Revells, for the pleasure of her

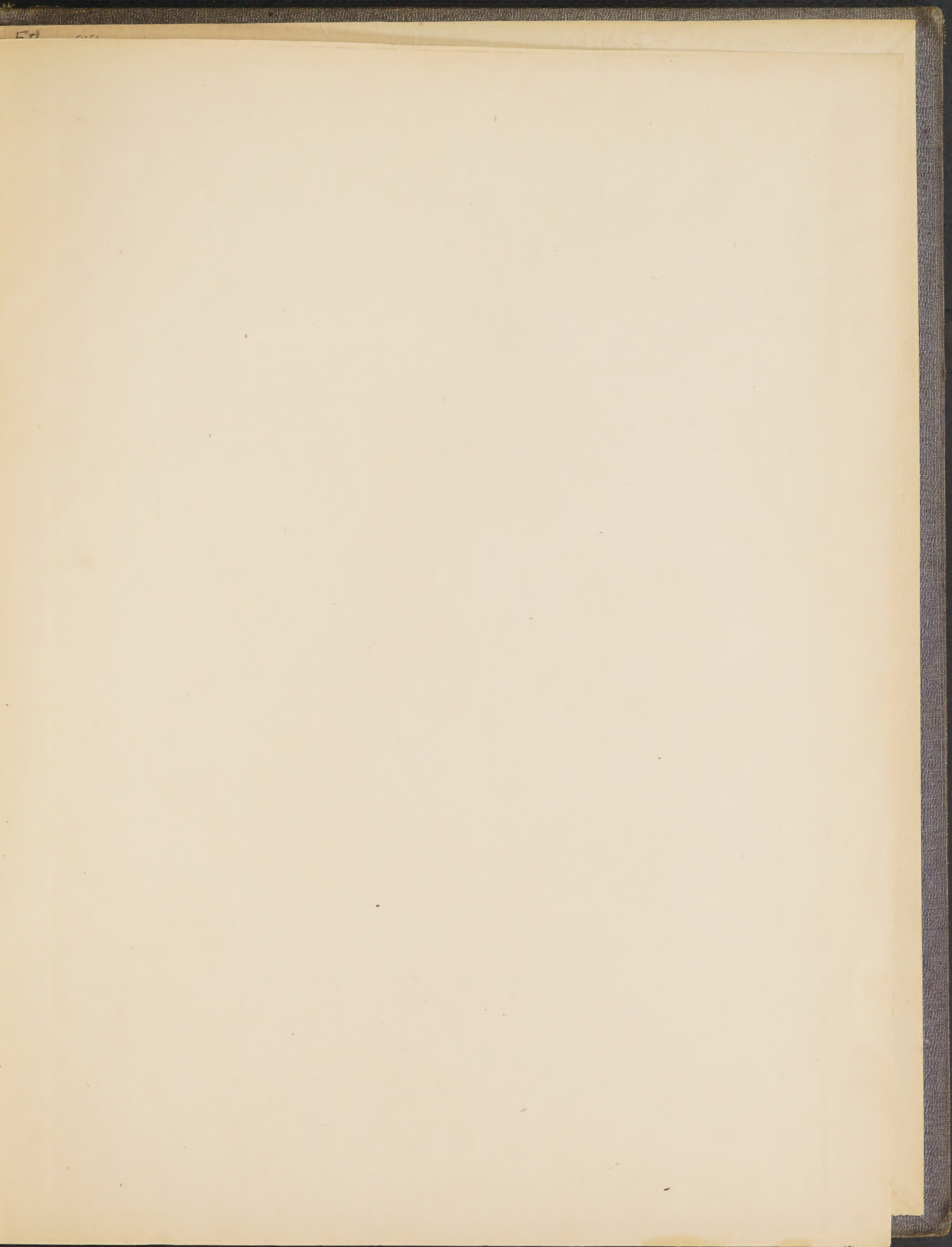
Majestie, 4^o Januarii, anno septimo Jacobi." This entry may have suggested the fabrication, the date of the questionable MS. corresponding with that here given; though it is capable of proof that, if it were authentic, it must have been dated previously, for the books of the Signet Office show that the authority for Daborne's warrant was obtained by the influence of Sir Thomas Munson in the previous December, and they also inform us that it was granted "to Robert Daborne, and other Servauntes to the Queene, from time to time to provide and bring up a convenient number of Children to practize in the quality of playing, by the name of the Children of the Revells to the Queene, *in the White Fryers, London*, or any other convenient place where he shall thinke fit." The enrolment of the instrument, which was issued in the form of letters patent under the Great Seal, recites, "Whereas the Quene, our deerest wyfe, hathe for hir pleasure and recreacion, when shee shall thinke it fitt to have any playes or shewes, appoynted hir servantes Robert Daborne, Phillippe Rosseter, John Tarbock, Richard Jones, and Robert Browne, to provide and bring upp a convenient number of Children, whoe shalbe called Children of hir Revelles, Know ye that wee have appoynted and authorised, and by theis presentes do authorize and appoynte the saide Robert Daborne, &c., from tyme to tyme, to provide, keepe, and bring upp a convenient number of children, and them to practice and exercise in the quality of playing, by the name of Children of the Revells to the Queene, within the White Fryers in the suburbs of our Citty of London, or in any other convenyent place where they shall thinke fitt for that purpose." This patent is dated January 4th, 7 Jac. I., 1609-10, so that any draft, or projected

warrant, exhibiting other names than the above, could not possibly have had this exact date. It will be observed that the names, with the exception of that of Daborne, are entirely different in the two documents, and this company of children was to play at the Whitefriars, not at the Blackfriars. The fabricator seems to have relied on the supposition that the entry relative to "Daborne and others" referred to the latter theatre; and consequently inserted the name of Edward Kirkham, who is known to have been one of the instructors of the children of the Revels at the Blackfriars in the year 1604. There is, in fact, no reasonable supposition on which the Ellesmere paper can be regarded as authentic. Had no date been attached to it, it might have been said that the whole related merely to some contemplated arrangement which was afterwards altered; although, even in that case, the form of the copy would alone have been a serious reason against its reception. In its present state, it is clearly impossible to reconcile it with the contents of the enrolment just quoted. Fortunately for the interests of truth, indications of forgery are detected in trifling circumstances that are almost invariably neglected by the inventor, however ingeniously the deception be contrived. Were it not for this, the search for historical truth would yield results sufficiently uncertain to deter the most enthusiastic enquirer from pursuing the investigation.

The remaining Shakesperian MSS. in the possession of the Earl of Ellesmere, consist of a letter of Daniel the poet mentioning the great dramatist as a candidate for the Mastership of the Queen's Revels; accounts in which a performance of *Othello* is stated to have taken place in the year 1602; a

remarkable paper detailing the values of the shares held by Shakespeare and others in the Blackfriars' Theatre; and the presumed early copy of letter signed "H. S.," supposed to have been written by Lord Southampton, and containing singular notices of Burbage and Shakespeare. The first two of these I have not seen, the volume including only a recent transcript of Daniel's letter; but the other two, which have been carefully inspected, present an appearance by no means satisfactory. Although the caligraphy is of a highly skilful character, and judging solely from a facsimile of the letter, I should certainly have accepted it as genuine, yet an examination of the original leads to a different judgment, the paper and ink not appearing to belong to so early a date. It is a suspicious circumstance that both these documents are written in an unusually large character on folio leaves of paper, *by the same hand*, and are evidently not contemporaneous copies. Again may the question be asked, why should transcripts of such papers have been made after the period to which the originals are supposed to refer? It is also curious that copies only of these important records should be preserved; and the whole matter is surrounded by the gravest suspicions and difficulties.

Only one record-reader, as far as I know, viz. the Rev. Joseph Hunter, has made a personal examination of these MSS. He has not yet expressed any opinion publicly, but I have reason to think that his views on the subject coincide with my own. It is clearly Mr. Collier's duty, as a lover of truth, to have the originals carefully scrutinised by the best judges of the day.



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